

What's In a Name?

Editorial

Quite a lot, it seems. Observant readers will notice a couple of name changes in this issue, both relating to our formats for publishing original research; our longer “Research Papers” have been renamed “Articles,” and the shorter “Brief Communications” are now called “Reports.”

Why have we made these changes? The main impetus came from feedback indicating that the name “Brief Communication,” in particular, can have negative connotations—some worry about the epithet “Brief,” others about the term “Communication,” and still others about both parts of the name. Some point out that our Brief Communications are not really so brief. The main concern is that the name may not be appropriate for what are proper papers reporting substantial scientific advances—the obvious parallel is with the Letter section of *Nature* (it has to be said that “Letter” hardly implies a weighty scientific document, though someone mentioned that it is at least better than “Brief Letter”...). A more general survey revealed, perhaps unsurprisingly, a very mixed set of views on this issue, with many failing to see any problem.

The balance of views expressed, however, has indicated that there is a real problem here. The first concern is the above-mentioned one of perception—simply the implication that the articles are rather slight contributions. There is another, perhaps more pressing problem, in that the *Nature* family of journals now uses the name Brief Communication consistently for an even shorter format, essentially correspondence items of a scientific nature. This creates the real possibility of confusion in people's minds.

These two considerations have persuaded us that it is time for a change, and we have taken the opportunity to become a bit more consistent with our sister journals at Cell Press, in particular *Neuron*, which has recently introduced a new “Report” format. We hope these changes will not themselves be a cause of confusion and that they will help convey the message that both formats are intended for papers reporting well-substantiated advances of general interest. There will be no change in the way submissions in either format are handled, nor in the criteria that distinguish between them.

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